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# Introduction and Summary of Goals

**T**he goals of the Honeygo Plan are to

- ☐ Preserve and protect the natural environment.
- ☐ Design and build a community, not just a collection of subdivisions and houses.
- ☐ Construct public infrastructure and facilities in advance of development.
- ☐ Place zoning and dwelling types, with design standards, in locations that implement the plan.

# Study Area History and Planning Processes

In 1979, Baltimore County, through its Master Plan, established the framework for a county-wide growth management program. The essence of this program was to direct new residential development into existing communities, town centers, and designated growth areas, thereby diverting significant new development away from rural, agricultural, and watershed protection areas. The cornerstone of this program was the designation of two new, growth areas -- Owings Mills and Perry Hall-White Marsh -- which, for a variety of reasons, were found to be the most suitable areas for higher density residential and commercial development.

A land use and infrastructure (i.e., roads, sewer, and water) plan for the Perry Hall-White Marsh Growth Area was adopted on February 4, 1985 and the zoning was changed accordingly. In the northern portion of the Growth Area, which for purposes of this study is called the Honeygo Area, the zoning changed from fairly uniform low densities of DR 2 and 3.5 to a pattern of high density residential (DR 5.5, 10.5, and 16) surrounding a commercial core. The study area is shown on the Existing Land Use and Existing Zoning maps on the following two pages.

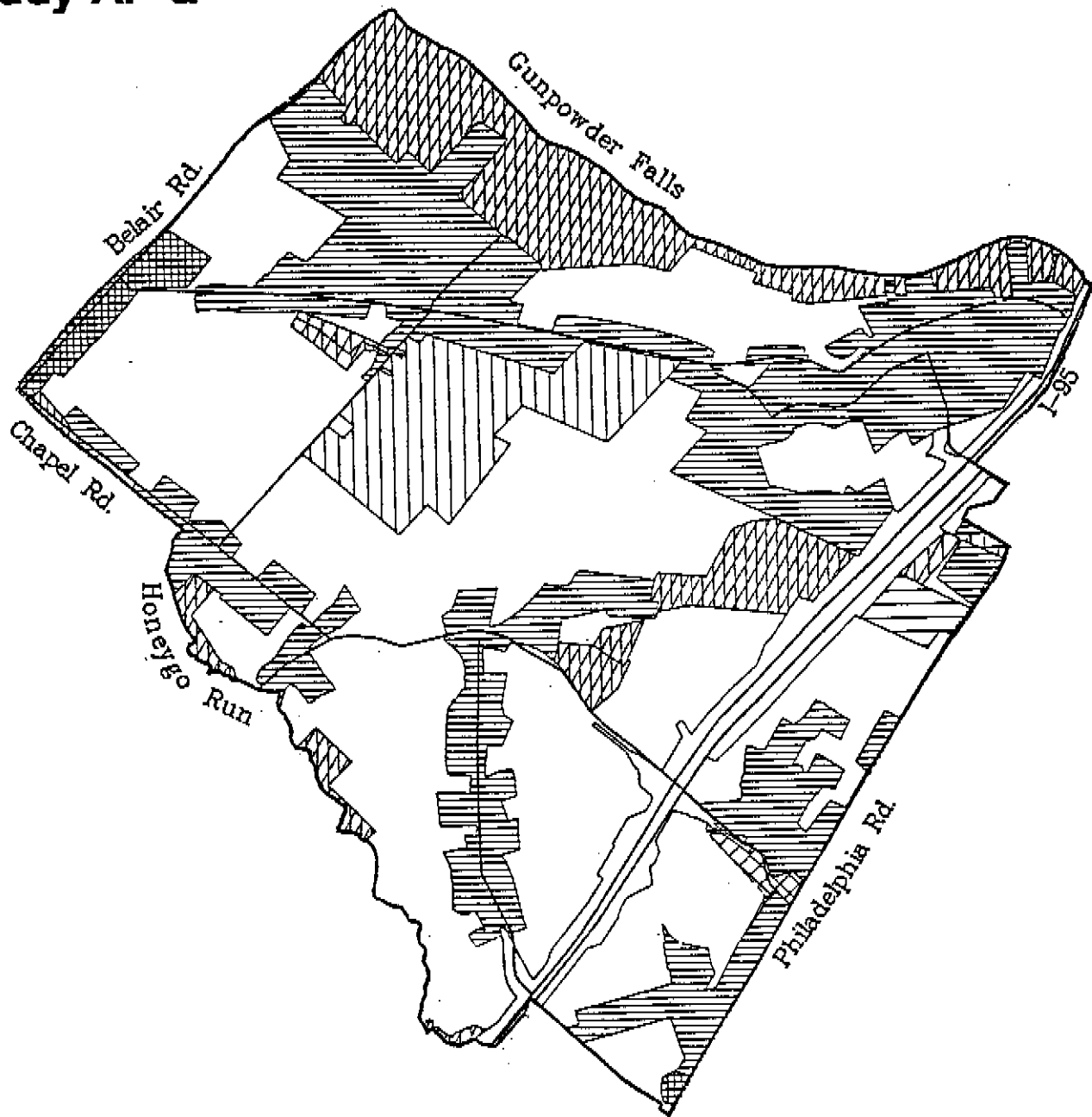
Over the next decade, development and for the most part, infrastructure improvements in the southern two-thirds of the Perry Hall-White Marsh Growth Area proceeded according to the plan and the zoning. However, by the late 1980s it became apparent to County agencies, developers, and the public that serious problems were developing. Important infrastructure improvements were deleted from the County's Capital Improvements Program and other projects, most notably Honeygo Boulevard and the Honeygo Sewer Interceptor, were significantly delayed because of funding constraints and other competing projects in the rest of the County. Essential open space and recreational areas within the Growth Area were not purchased and it was projected that there would be a 700 acre parkland deficit based on the State standard for open space. The elementary, middle, and high schools were either overcapacity or going to be overcapacity with little immediate relief in sight. New compre-

hensive environmental regulations to protect wetlands, stream systems, steep slopes, forest cover, and existing vegetation were adopted by Federal, State, and local governments, significantly affecting the development potential of the land. And finally, because of overzoning and the lack of design standards, the area was not becoming a cohesive, well-designed community. To many, the Perry Hall-White Marsh Growth Area has not developed as a planned community, but rather as an unconnected series of residential subdivisions that are out pacing key public services and facilities.

The Baltimore County Master Plan 1989-2000 recognized these issues and while reaffirming the essential growth management strategy structured on growth areas, the Master Plan further recognized that times have changed since the adoption of the original Perry Hall-White Marsh Plan. In particular, the population projections have not materialized, potentially undercutting the need for large amounts of high density zoning previously put in place to meet the projected demand. This, combined with the shift in public policy away from the growth at any cost philosophy and the reality of limited tax revenues, led the County to recommend a systematic evaluation of the various growth management policies, with particular emphasis placed on the effectiveness of the two designated Growth Areas. The Baltimore County Master Plan 1989-2000 strongly recommended that "...an objective examination of both areas is in order to ascertain the need for any mid-course corrections" (Baltimore County Master Plan 1989-2000, pg. 47). Specifically, the Plan recommended an update of the Perry Hall-White Marsh Plan with particular focus on scheduling development so that the full range of necessary services were provided before developments were occupied.





In addition, the Master Plan recommended that "[u]rban design and architectural standards, marketing strategies and other means for achieving a clearer, distinctive high quality identity for the Perry Hall-White Marsh Growth Area [will] be prepared by the County in cooperation with the development industry and community organizations." (Baltimore County Master Plan 1989-2000, p. 110)

# Study Area





## Honeygo Study Area Existing Land Use

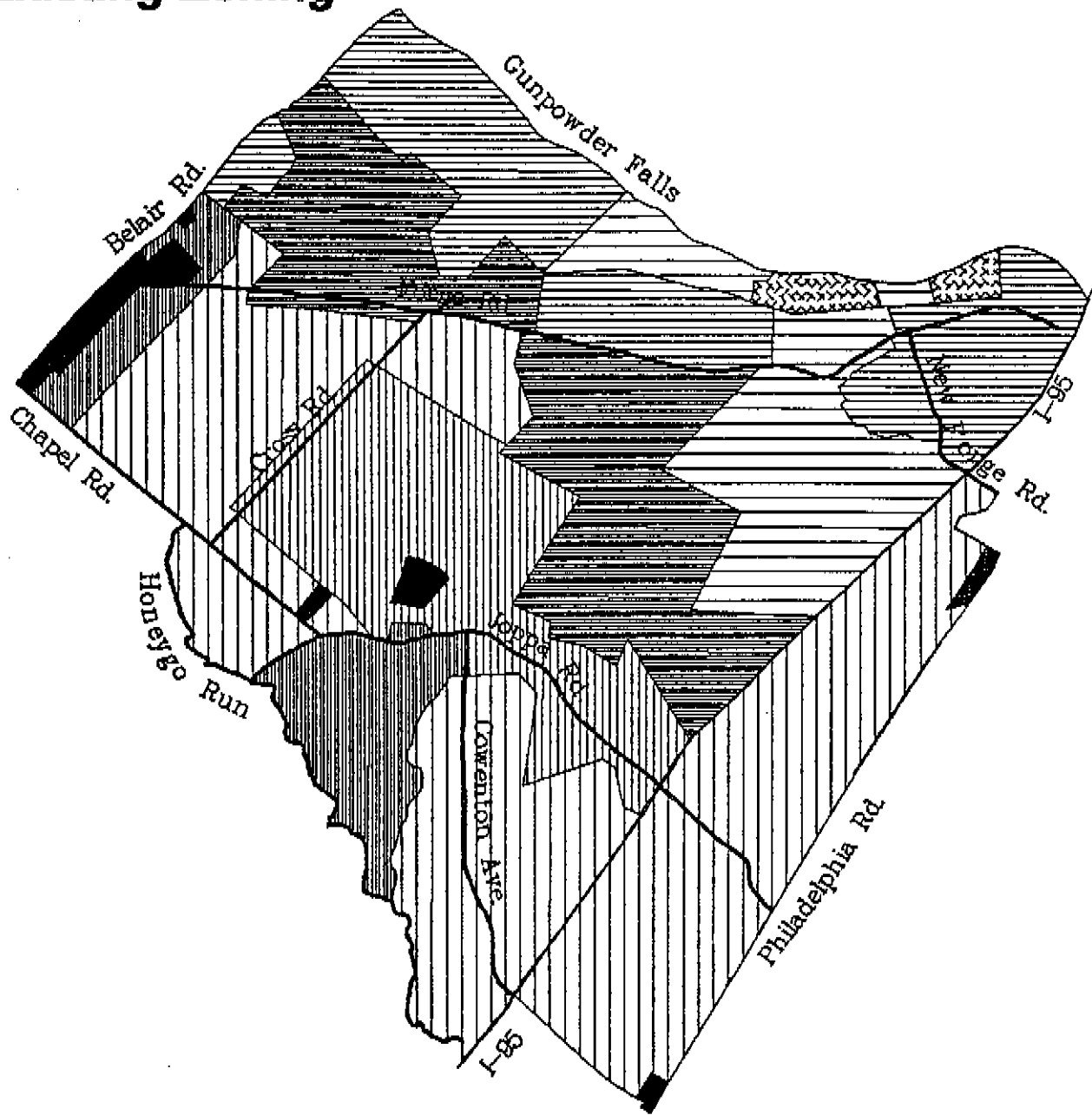
### Existing

-  Single Family Detached
-  Commercial
-  Parks
-  Undeveloped









### Pipeline

-  Single Family Detached
-  Multifamily

# Existing Zoning



## Honeygo Study Area Existing Zoning

 RC5	 DR5.5
 DR1	 DR10.5
 DR2	 DR16
 DR3.5	 NON RESIDENTIAL

In 1992, the Office of Planning and Zoning and the local community proposed rezoning about 870 acres of land zoned for high density residential use to lower density residential use in the Honeygo Area. In response to that action, the County Executive and County Council adopted a resolution on June 1, 1992 calling for a voluntary moratorium on development pending the adoption of a comprehensive plan for the Honeygo Area. This Plan proposes recommendations on land use, zoning, infrastructure, design, funding, and phasing; it also meets the requirement of the resolution for the County administration to submit a plan to the Planning Board within 2 years of the moratorium's adoption.

#### **Process**

The moratorium resolution established a Steering Committee which was chaired by the County Administrative Officer and composed of representatives from the Administration, County Council, Planning Board, property owners, home builders, and local community associations. This group met every three months to review the County's progress on the Plan. After every two meetings with the Advisory Group, town meetings were held at the Joppa View Elementary School to keep the public informed. Additionally, progress reports were submitted to the County Executive and County Council every six months. The North-east Reporter, Baltimore Sun, The Avenue and other local newspapers periodically published articles about the Plan's preparation.

For nearly 18 months, County agencies performed extensive background studies on infrastructure, design, and environmental issues; evaluated the development potential of various subareas; and field surveyed the study area with the Army Corps of Engineers and the Maryland Department of Natural Resources to obtain concurrence on corridors for the sewer interceptors and Honeygo Boulevard. Four land use alternatives were then developed based on the findings of these studies and field investigations. The alternatives ranged from the existing zoning (10,550 units) to a high density alternative (8,775 units) to a "neotraditional" mixed unit scenario (7,610 units) to a low density single-family alternative (5,310 units). Based upon comments from the Steering Committee and public as well as an evaluation against the Plan objectives, a preferred alternative was developed.

The preferred alternative proposal and attendant infrastructure, design, and zoning policies are discussed in this Honeygo Plan. The Plan was introduced to the Planning Board on March 3, 1994, and will be the subject of a Planning Board public hearing on March 24, 1994. After this hearing the Board will review the Plan, propose any modifications or changes, and then forward their recommendations to the County Council. The Council will also hold a public hearing and then review and act upon the Plan. If adopted, the Plan will be an amendment to the Baltimore County Master Plan 1989-2000 and implemented through the zoning, capital funding, and development review mechanisms outlined in this Plan.

# Plan Objectives

## Design

The primary objective of the Honeygo Plan is to create a high quality community based upon the historic notion of a town. This includes a true town center surrounded by well designed residential neighborhoods that are built around neighborhood parks and connected to each other by landscaped streets and open spaces. Rather than replicate conventional development patterns found in recent Baltimore County developments that are a series of independent subdivisions reflecting a particular building niche, the Honeygo Plan intends to link neighborhoods, design community focal points, and provide access to useable open space. Models that were selected to be emulated included residential communities such as Oak Forest Park in Catonsville, Sudbrook Park in Pikesville, Rodgers Forge and Stoneleigh in Towson, Dundalk Center, and Homeland in Baltimore City. Contemporary examples include Kentlands in Montgomery County and the commercial infill within Historic Laurel.

## Environmental Protection

The rapid pace of development during the last several decades has fostered an increased awareness of the environmental impacts of development. Beginning with storm water management and then most recently the adoption of the State Forest Conservation legislation, development in Baltimore County has been affected by increased environmental regulations. The result has been that an increasing percentage of the County's land mass has become unbuildable. Floodplains, wetlands, steep slopes, erodible soils, and forests are now under regulation. Density on these undevelopable areas can be applied to other areas of a site that are buildable with the development then appearing much more dense than was originally intended. There is also less flexibility on the buildable portion to accommodate site design that reinforces a sense of community. The outcome is invariably an overcrowded development with buildings, parking lots, and roads covering all the buildable area and minimal, often leftover, useable open space.

The Honeygo Plan identifies, to the extent possible, all environmentally sensitive areas which cannot be developed. Wetlands and buffers were field delineated so that road and sewer alignments could be designed. Floodplains, wetlands, and buffers not located in projected road or sewer alignments were also identified in order to assess the limits of development. These areas should not be overzoned in order to

- 1) ensure protection of the resources and the water quality of the Bird River and Gunpowder River;
- 2) facilitate design quality; and
- 3) ensure realistic assessments of development potential.

Additionally, the preservation, maintenance, or in some cases, the reestablishment of environmentally sensitive areas needs to be assured. At the time of development, all environmentally sensitive areas should be dedicated to Baltimore County at no cost. Their dedication will help protect them from disturbance and will allow the County to reestablish areas that have been degraded. The Honeygo Area is also targeted to use innovative concepts such as wetlands and forest banking. The reforestation of areas should occur along I-95 in the vicinity of the Sky Park not only to provide reforestation, but to also serve as a noise and visual buffer.

## **Infrastructure**

In the Honeygo Area, infrastructure should be provided prior to development rather than during development, or as so often happens in the case of schools and parks, after development. An infrastructure phasing schedule must be provided to enable the County to address demand for services prior to the actual demand taking place and should be adopted as part of the Plan. This can be addressed through the Capital Improvements Program which provides a six year schedule of where and when the County intends to make infrastructure improvements throughout the County. It must be recognized, however, that other capital priorities will be competing with the Honeygo Area including the completion of projects currently underway in other growth areas and the need to rehabilitate existing roads, water, sewer lines, and parks located in the County's older communities. The County's commitment to its older communities will take precedence over competing capital funding interests. The County Executive has called for the creation of an urban community conservation plan, and the County Council has endorsed his action. The Council has publicly committed itself to a program of capital funding for the County's school system and the infrastructure for the older communities which are the backbone of the County.

## **Financial Impact**

As alluded to in the previous section, Baltimore County is facing serious financial constraints and the fiscal consequences of any land use alternative for the Honeygo Area must be evaluated. Over the last decade, the County authorized approximately \$30 million for public improvements to serve the Perry Hall-White Marsh Growth Area. Some capital projects are key to the success of the growth area, such as the Honeygo Boulevard and Sewer Interceptor, and must be considered regardless of the land use alternative proposed for the Honeygo Area. All funding for the capital projects must be balanced against the County's commitment to minimize borrowing and maintain stable tax rates.

At first glance, it would appear that the tax revenues generated by higher densities would best offset the costs of needed infrastructure. However, with increased densities, there is also a concomitant increase in demand for more facilities and services. Higher densities also result in fewer tax dollars per dwelling without a similar reduction in the demand for services.

Various alternative financing techniques for funding capital improvements have been evaluated by the County. Impact fees, which require the developer to contribute either all or a portion of the necessary funding at the time of issuing building permits and are pro-rated on a per unit basis over all the units expected to be built in the area, have two major problems. First, the County by law cannot levy impact fees without State approval. State enabling legislation would be required before the County could assess fees. Secondly, the use of impact fees compels the County to spend the necessary funds at the time of development. If the County is compelled to fund projects, then County-wide priorities may have to be adjusted so that these projects are funded. The creation of a special taxing district was also considered. The use of a taxing district essentially sets an additional tax over an area so that these funds can be used to retire debt on loans. The County still has to borrow the money, which may conflict with other County funding priorities, and taxes are dependent upon the economy. Finally, taxing districts also raise questions of equity regarding services provided to other parts of the County.

## **Consistency With Other Plans And Policies**

In addition to the Baltimore County Master Plan 1989-2000 which recommended that the Honeygo portion of the Perry Hall-Whitemarsh Growth Area be reevaluated, the County has also begun the Eastern Baltimore Economic Revitalization Initiative. The primary purpose of this project is to develop an economic framework from which the eastern portion of the County can develop or redevelop. Through the Economic Development Commission, the vast resources of the existing industrial zoning and development are being evaluated to determine the future of this area. Major projects which have heightened this concern include development of surplus Bethlehem Steel Plant property, the vacant A.V. Williams Tract, the extension of Rt. 43 to Eastern Blvd., and the interchange at Rt. 7 and Rt. 43.

One of the key components identified in the initial phases of this work was the lack of housing for people who would like to move-up in housing value and still stay within the area. This type of housing is not available in a urban setting within this general area and lack of choice is contributing to the migration of eastern Baltimore County residents to Harford County and to some degree, Pennsylvania.

Limited housing choices and lackluster developments have also been cited as some of the reasons eastern Baltimore County has difficulty in attracting major employers. Competition for job generating uses is stiff and the east side needs amenities that will give it an edge over other locations in both the County and the Region. The Honeygo Area is the only large undeveloped urban area left within the County. This is the last chance Baltimore County has to create a truly distinctive community capable of drawing and keeping both residents and employers.